

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5941

As Reported By Senate Select Committee On:
Water Policy, February 28, 1995

Title: An act relating to coordinated water resources programs.

Brief Description: Allowing counties to establish coordinated water resources programs.

Sponsors: Senators Fraser and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Water Policy: 2/27/95, 2/28/95 [DP-WM].

Ways & Means: 3/3/95.

SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON WATER POLICY

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Drew, Fraser, Haugen, Rasmussen, Spanel, Sutherland and Winsley.

Staff: Phil Moeller (786-7445)

Background: Although the Growth Management Act requires certain counties to develop comprehensive plans for land use, housing, capital facilities, transportation, and public utilities, no specific direction is provided for integrating water resources management with growth planning activities. It has been suggested that counties are an appropriate level of government for water resource planning.

Summary of Bill: Any county that is required to or chooses to adopt a comprehensive land use plan is authorized to assume the responsibility for coordinating the planning or management of some or all water resources within all or a portion of the county on a watershed or island-wide basis.

The county legislative authority of any county that is required to or chooses to adopt a comprehensive land use plan may establish, by resolution, a coordinated water resources program. In developing its proposal for a coordinated water resources program, the county legislative authority must consult with the affected cities, tribes, and special districts.

A county assuming the responsibility for coordinating the planning or management of water resources is directed to work with the state Departments of Ecology and Health, affected Indian tribes, the local health agency, affected cities, and special districts within the watershed. If a watershed is located in more than one county, each of the affected counties should participate in the coordinated effort. Where appropriate, the Puget Sound Water Quality Authority must also be invited to participate. It is also recommended that the Departments of Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife, other interested state agencies, relevant agencies of the federal government, and other public and private interested parties be invited to participate.

After convening the necessary parties and agreeing upon the boundaries of the watersheds or islands included in the coordinated water resources program, the county legislative authority, by resolution or ordinance, describes the boundaries of the water resources program and, to the extent possible, describes its scope and the plan for coordinating the management of water resources within its boundaries.

A county establishing a coordinated water resources program is required to evaluate existing programs and districts that manage water resources to determine whether any should be eliminated.

A county that establishes a coordinated water resources program may establish a coordinated water resources district. The coordinated water resources district may finance the elements of the water resources program through any combination of federal, state, or private grants or loans or local revenues.

A county, city, or special district may authorize up to 10 percent of existing revenues collected within the watershed toward water resource protection or management responsibilities. A participating county is also required to establish a special water resources account for receiving and expending any funds for coordinating water resource activities.

The Office of Financial Management is directed to work with the Departments of Ecology, Health, and Community, Trade, and Economic Development to develop a proposal for combining current funding sources available for local governments, and for providing new state matching funds to counties that implement a coordinated water resources program. The proposal must be submitted to the Legislature by November 1, 1995.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Counties are in a good position to conduct regional water resource planning. The provision allowing the creation of accounts on the county level will provide the opportunity to conduct these activities without raising additional taxes on fees.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Fraser, prime sponsor.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Susan Lucas (786-7711)

Testimony For: The bill provides counties a method of combining the many programs relating to water resource management into one program. Fees and charges can be used to pay for a part of the county's contribution to regional water planning. Although this will not cover all the costs of regional water planning, it is a contribution.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Paul Parker, Assn. of Counties.